1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

posed action of witches, exercised the right of expelling members thought to be dangerous to it. Nowadays, since a village is no longer held responsible for the torts of its members, men are not often banished for theft or adultery, but supposed witches and sorcerers are still frequently compelled to move. 681

There is also a great deal of voluntary movement to escape friction in the village. This is commonly expressed in terms of witchcraft—a family moves to avoid the witchcraft of its neighbours; but neighbours are not feared unless there has been a quarrel. It is when the parties to some dispute have *not* been reconciled that fear of witchcraft germinates, and illness precipitates a move. 166 578

Among ordinary commoners only their immediate neighbours are believed to be dangerous and such men therefore sometimes move only from one village to another of the same chiefdom; but very many move right outside to another chiefdom altogether, preferring to make assurance doubly sure and to put a long distance between themselves and their spiritual persecutors. And in the case of certain men of high social status, such as senior village headmen who are the advisers of the chief, and priests, for whom a wider circle is dangerous, it is held to be essential to leave the chiefdom.

We have argued (*vide supra*, p. 36) that movement from village to village has always occurred among the Nyakyusa but that it is increasing. The change is almost certainly a symptom of increasing friction within the village. One traditional mechanism of settling disputes—the ordeal—has lapsed, while fear of one's neighbours' witchcraft continues. It is possible also that the incidence of disease, and hence of suspected witchcraft and sorcery, has increased among the Nyakyusa—tuberculosis and venereal diseases are said to have spread greatly since 1914[1] and, in the opinion of the German missionaries, malaria is much more prevalent at the higher altitudes than it was before 1914; but there 166 578 164

[1] The incidence of tuberculosis in Rungwe district is now thought to be about sixteen per thousand (C. Wilcocks, *Tuberculosis in Tanganyika Territory*, Government Printer, Dar-es-salaam, 1938). Dr. D. Kerr-Cross, in a list of diseases encountered during ten years' practice in north Nyasaland before 1897 reports that he only saw one case of 'pulmonary tubercular phthisis', but syphilis (which the natives called 'the disease of the Arabs'), was very prevalent. Dr. Kerr-Cross was a missionary doctor who travelled extensively in Nyakyusa country. (See his articles already cited and H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa*, pp. 472-3.)

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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166 578 164 is another reason also for increasing movement. Formerly, to move to a strange chiefdom was hazardous—a refugee might be killed, or his wife or cattle seized by the chief; nowadays it is safe. Even to-day a man's status is lower in the village in which he is a stranger than in his home village. The old families of a village, 'the owners of the soil' (*abalima*), are spoken of as *amafumu*, which, in its restricted sense, means village headmen who have 'come out' with the chief, but which is also used more widely for commoners of importance. And in the past, we were told, an individual's security of life and property depended upon the support of his neighbours, the *amafumu*, and a stranger was much less likely to receive this than an 'owner of the soil'. If a chief seized a stranger's wife no one would protest, but if he dared to touch the wife of an 'owner of the soil' the village would rise as one man. Hence the incentive to overcome friction by submission, rather than by moving, was stronger in the old society than it is to-day.[1] It may well become stronger again soon. The present circulation from village to village is possible because men are still scarcer than land in Nyakyusa country, but as the population increases, and the production of crops for sale expands, it is probable that strangers will be less welcome and movement more difficult.

166 624 To lose a member who has not been expelled is a slur on a village, for the implication is that the man who has moved has suffered from the witchcraft of his neighbours. A good neighbour should persuade a fellow contemplating a voluntary move to stay (*vide infra*, p. 243), and when someone has moved of his own accord (and sometimes even when he has been expelled) his fellows go, after the lapse of a little time, to fetch him back.

'When a man moves from his home chiefdom, his village neighbours there, in the majority of cases, follow him within two months and ceremonially invite him back with a show of force by seizing his belongings and carrying them off home to his old village. They may really like and respect him and if, as is usually the case, he has moved because of sickness, they are most anxious to prove to him that his tacit suspicions are unfounded, they wish to rid themselves of the slur of witchcraft. To invite him back is to express affection for him and so to demonstrate that he could

[1] cf. the modern tendency for Pondo homesteads to break up, Hunter, op. cit., pp. 63, 92.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

commoners, and they went together to the grove of Mwangalaba, the last Kyungu (elder brother of Peter), with a white hen and sacrificed it there, and prayed saying:

Mwangalaba go thou to Mwakasungula your father and let him go to Mwangonde, and he to Mwagemo and he to Kipewa and he to Mperta and he to Mwendemange and he to Kyabula and he to Syula and he to the Kyungu who lived at Mano and he to Ngululue (9) and Lyambilo (10). May he stand by us, may we sleep, may the rats disappear and illness also, may we sleep. Then when we had finished the invocation [I quote Mulwa] we extinguished the fires in all our houses; in the houses of the chiefs, and of Kyungu's great wife Namwilan'ombe, and of us commoners, we threw water on the ashes, but each took some ash, and a firebrand to the crossroads at Kyimbwe where we collected them all and left them to rot; there we threw away the rats saying: 'Let them fly away to Ngululue (9), let them fly away with the wind, let us sleep.' Then we ran to the pasture land to make new fire with a drill. We all took fire there in the bush, each a firebrand and lighted new fires in our own houses and in the house of the Kyungu, that is of his great wife. We arranged it with our wife Namwilan'ombe, because Kyungu had said 'Work with your husbands there'.

'Throwing away the rats' consisted in enclosing a live rat in two winnowing baskets, opening them at Kyimbwe, and flourishing them first in one direction and then in another, releasing the rat in the process. This had been specifically ordered by Bungulu, the prophetess.

(8) THE GROUND HORNBILL

In the country of Porokoto (49 K) there was much illness and many deaths (some, at least, from typhoid) during the dry season of 1933, and when a ground hornbill—always a bird of ill-omen among the Nyakyusa—mysteriously attacked a chicken in Syokela village, everyone was horrified. Mwamunda, a village headman, explained what had happened:

The headman of Syokela came with two men to Bwilile (senior village headman of his side) and said: 'Tell the chief that a ground hornbill has eaten a fowl at our place. We ask what this means. And also we do not sleep, we are ill.' Then Bwilile told me and we went together to the chief who said: 'I have heard, let us discuss it.' So we gathered at Neyoni's and the headman of Syokela stood up and said: 'My fathers, and friends, and children, and you chiefs, we have come to ask: have you ever before heard of a ground hornbill eating a fowl? (With an air

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 F'HG7 Ngonde F'HG7
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER III

CHANGING CONDITIONS AND THE PRESENT SITUATION

Population

At the Africa Census in 1948 there were recorded, in their own tribal [161]
area, approximately 196,000 Nyakyusa at an average density over the land available for their use of 212 persons per square mile.

In the Lake Plains alone there were, in 1948, 55,700 inhabitants living at an average density of 268 persons per square mile. Population densities in the other Nyakyusa areas were rather lower than this.

These figures do not, however, give the full picture from the point of view of land occupation and use, for large numbers of men, and some [167]
women, were at the time of the Census absent from their homes and living temporarily in employment areas abroad – chiefly in the Rhodesias and South Africa. I have estimated elsewhere that approximately 8,000 men would have been away in 1948, of whom 95 per cent. or even more would return to settle down at home, for there was only a very small proportion of men who remained more or less permanently absent. That is to say, these men remained dependent for their land needs on their own tribal territory, and indeed at least some were active land-holders whilst the rest had lesser rights in family holdings.

If, therefore, we include these temporary absentees, the measure of the pressure of population on the land is shown by an average density of population for all Nyakyusa of 220 persons per square mile. At least 3,000 of these migrant labourers (possibly more) had their homes in the Lake Plains, and this number increased the density of population dependent on the land resources of this region to 282 persons per square mile.

The statistically average family in 1948 comprised about five people, and therefore the population density can be restated in the form that for all Nyakyusa there were available about 15 acres of land per family. In the Lake Plains there were about 12 acres of land available. These averages do not, of course, take account of either unusable land such as swamps, steep slopes, infertile tracts, etc., nor of the land necessarily taken up by roads and paths, open spaces in the villages and the like.[1]

These figures indicate that, taking a broad and general view based on averages, the density of Nyakyusa population or their pressure on their tribal lands ranked amongst the highest in Tanganyika in 1948.[2]

Unfortunately census enumerations before 1948 were too unreliable to [164]
allow of any satisfactory estimate of the probable rates of population increase, but from general information and internal evidence it is thought not unreasonable to suggest that in the Lake Plains population is increasing perhaps at the rate of one per cent. per annum, and in the rest of the tribal area the annual increase may be one and a half per cent. per annum. The [169]
high incidence of malaria and other debilitating diseases in the Lake Plains during the flood period of the wet season each year accounts for the lower estimate of increase there.

1. The necessity to reduce to these satisfactory of Nyakyusa who were permanently resident in other parts of the Territory, their land claims in Mbeya District, Kyela and Ufipa District, their absentee land ownership [illegible] 1948.

2. The higher population densities in 1948 were in Sukuma – Mwanza District 276, Musoma 227, Tabora 208, Lushoto 270, Kilimanjaro including Moshi area, Pare, Lushoto, Usambara 241, Arusha 190, Meru 188, Ngorongoro including Mbulumbulu, Mbulu, Lushoto, Kondoa 181, Iringa 181, Mbeya 181, Ngoni-Nyasaland Tribal Population Density, Native Authority Census, 1948.

13:Lehmann E-5 (939) 1951 F'N17 Ngonde F'N17
Nyakyusa

4. A visit to the chief's father's grave was paid in company with the chief and some of his *amafumu*. It was situated in a banana grove (*ilingata*[1]) not very remote from the chief's hut. The grave of the present chief's father was on the ground-floor, about one hundred paces from its edge and was characterized by a small rectangular basalt block about half a metre in height[2] and about forty centimetres in breadth. An *indeke*-plant was also standing on the grave about one metre from the basalt block.

On this occasion the chief also told me of the special cases for which sacrifices are offered in this grove. These are performed only in cases of very serious accidents, sickness or famine which may overcome the chiefdainship. In such cases a black cow is slaughtered after sunset at the edge of the grove. In the presence of the chief some pieces of meat of the slaughtered beast, together with some bananas, are laid down at the grave. The chief adds a prayer to his ancestors at some distance from the grave, referring to the evil by which the chiefdainship or some special village of it has been afflicted. He enumerates all the names of his ancestors and asks them for their help.

The remaining pieces of the meat and other bananas are left in the grove during the night. When the next day dawns, the *amafumu* return and some *abangaga* divide the meat and eat it together. On this occasion the chief orders the removal of all remains of ashes from the huts. The ashes are thrown down in such unclean places as where leprous persons had been buried. After this has been done, the chief in conjunction with an *umugaga*[3] produces a new fire for the huts by twirling, and all other fires of the village, or villages, must be kindled anew from this "need-fire".

5. The reason for visiting an *umdeputi* (diviner)[4] who dwelled in Ilongo an older age-set village[5] which seemed to the visitor to be a more ancient part of Katumba, was caused by the sickness of the chief's sister. In accordance with the custom of the Nyakyusa to bring women back to their father's village if they are very sick, the

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[1] Cf. Johnston, Gazetteer, pl. *umusiata*, p. 450; Mackenzie, Gazetteer, burial place, p. 300; *mungata*, grove of the dead clouds, p. 151; Wilson, Introduction, p. 197, *ilingata*, sacred grove; Merensky, p. 115.

[2] Cf. Pöllabauer, p. 197.

[3] Cf. n. 2, p. 5.

[4] Cf. Johnston, p. 451.

[5] I proposed to call the special form of villages found within the Nyakyusa society, which are erected on the age-set principle, „age-set villages" (Africana Studies, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 19—20 June 1945), a terminology that does not alter G. Wilson's statements on the "Age Villages" (Introduction, p. 200 ff).

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FNI7 Ngonde FNI7
Nyakyusa

787 [164 484] sister of the chief had also been brought back to the village of her brother. I was of the opinion that she was afflicted by a serious tropical ulcer on the ankle of the left foot. The healing of these ulcers commonly takes a very long time, and as this woman had already much suffered, and as the medicine-men consulted seemed to be unable to restore her, she was brought to her brother's village, but there also she had not yet recovered. The chief had, therefore, resolved to ask the diviner, whose name was *Mwaigwisya*, for the real cause of her sickness.

After he and his *amafumu* had taken their seats on mats, the chief explained to the diviner the reason of his visit. The diviner then grasped a curved piece of wood about 20 cms. in length with his right hand, after he had spat upon his hands. Then he moved the wood round his head, and finally placed it with one of its ends on the even, cleansed ground before his mat, and waited for the questions of the chief. The single questions, as for instance: "Is the sickness caused by Kyara?", or "Is the sickness caused by this or that person?", etc., were put to the diviner by *Lamek Mwainyekule*, the son of a chief of another chieftainship[14], now belonging to the *amafumu* of *Mwamasika*, as he now stayed in his village. *Mwainyekule* seemed to be not only

[291 516]

The Séance with the diviner.

[776] the most intimate adviser of *Mwamasika*, but altogether the most clever man I met among this people. After each of the questions addressed to him the diviner murmured the names of the chief's

[14] A village of this name is to be found on *Dr. Kieperts* map (of 1895), southern to the Kieyo.